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What is a morning prayer / evening prayer?

Question: "What is a morning prayer? What is an evening prayer?"

Answer: Many Christians pray a morning prayer when they awake and an evening prayer before they go to bed. Christian children are often taught to "say their prayers" before they go to bed every night as a way to honor God and nurture spiritual development. In some churches, morning and evening prayers are [liturgical](#) prayers one offers to God at specific times of the day.

In biblical times, devout Jews were often at [prayer](#) and likely prayed at certain times throughout the day ([Psalm 5:3; 55:17](#); [119:62; 147](#)), but the tradition of setting aside three specific times for ritual prayer developed while the Israelites were in exile in Babylon and Persia. The temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed, but the people continued to offer prayer morning, noon, and evening to coincide with what had previously been times of sacrifice at the temple (see [Daniel 6](#), particularly verse 10).

In the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church turned the tradition of prayer at specific times of day into a liturgy, setting a schedule called the Breviary. The Breviary marks specific hours of the day with prayer, each of the hours having a different title. The schedule starts with Matins (midnight) and then continues with Lauds (dawn), Prime (early morning), Terce (mid-morning), Sext (noon), None (mid-afternoon), Vespers (evening), and Compline (prior to bedtime, about 9:00 PM). These prayers are also known as the Liturgy of the Hours, the Divine Office, the Work of God, and the canonical hours.

In 1962 Pope Paul VI set out a new Breviary at the Second Vatican Council, defining the major and minor hours. The Office of Readings (formerly Matins), Lauds, and Vespers became the major hours, with all else being minor. According to Catholicism, the two most important hours are the morning and evening prayers. The morning prayer includes a reading based on [Luke 1:68-79](#) (the *Benedictus*), and the evening prayer contains a reading based on [Luke 1:46-55](#) (the *Magnificat*). Both hours also include various psalms, hymns, and other readings.

Several churches use morning and evening prayers today, including Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and Lutheran. Morning prayers are meant for praise, while evening prayers are set aside for thanksgiving. When said in a congregation, morning and evening prayers follow a specific liturgy that includes prayer, hymns, and Scripture readings. The prayers themselves are memorized or read and are most often spoken in a call-and-response format between a leader and congregation. Some churches also encourage individuals to pray morning and evening prayers; many examples of these prescribed prayers can be found online.

While morning and evening prayers can be meaningful, there is no biblical requirement on *when* to pray, and there is no substitute for prayers that come from the heart. A liturgy may be helpful insofar as it contains Scripture, and many believers may find that a regimen of scheduled prayer aids their growth in Christ. But a liturgy, with its prescribed recitations and stipulated schedule, cannot replace a personal relationship with Christ. God wants to hear from each of us as individuals—our thanksgiving ([1 Chronicles 16:34](#)), praise ([1 Chronicles 16:28](#)), confession ([1 John 1:9](#)), and requests ([Philippians 4:6](#)). Prayer must not be relegated to just morning and evening, but we are to pray without ceasing ([1 Thessalonians 5:17](#)). There is nothing wrong with praying a morning and evening prayer, but personalized prayer throughout the day is more important than ritual and liturgy.

Recommended Resource: [The Prayer That Turns the World Upside Down: The Lord's Prayer as a Manifesto for Revolution by](#)

[R. Albert Mohler Jr.](#)

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